6 June 14th No 1

Demetrys statement

New Orleans May 11th 1839

Thomas Slidell, Esqr

Sir,

In conformity with your intimation on the 10th Inst, that I should give you a written statement in relation to the difficulties which have happened in the Weighing department, I now make the following:

1° On my being appointed clerk in the Treasurer's Office, I understood that in order to carry out the views of the Government and throw into circulation as much small change as possible, (which could not be done without a slight deviation from the usual routine of business), that I should give to all persons and for all sums from $5. and upwards, small coins of this mint. In consequence of the usual supply of Mexican bullion being cut off temporarily by the French blockade, it was found necessary in order to get materials wherewith to operate, that this proceeding should be stopped, and that deposites should be required to be made according to the regular routine of business in this Branch Mint. It was decided that the minimum amount should be $100. In consequence this small deposites of Mexican Spanish and South American dollars became very numerous — Early in April, the Melter & Refiner told me that these small deposites gave him an unnecessary trouble, and caused a useless consumption of fuel, and repeated the same thing to the Superintendent, It was decided that these small deposites should be reserved until they made a full melt, say $2000; not reflecting at the time on the unavoidable confusion which must necessarily follow a change in the regular ordinal progression of numbering.

2° According to this new mode of "small change deposits", two deposits of one hundred dollars each, were made by Wm. Topham & J. Lacroix on the sixteenth of April last, for which they received dollar for dollar in small change, without their deposites undergoing the weighing before melting, melting, & weighing after melting. The previous deposite made on the 14th by J. B. Borelly and which went through the regular process of weighing, melting and reweighing according to the regulations of the Mint, was marked No 96, being the consecutive number of John Young's deposite preceding this one. Wm Topham's coming after this, was marked No 97, and J. Lacroix's immediately following, was numbered 98. It may be proper here to remark, that Topham and Lacroix's deposites ~~were never numbered~~ have never been weighed — that they were entered $86\frac{50}{100}$ ounces at the suggestion of ~~the~~ Melter & Refiner, ~~he~~ stating that it was the average weight of Mexican Dollars; — the same observation will hold good for the small change deposites made after the Tichenor's and Damian Casas's system, there was no necessity of weighing them as we had in fact returned to the ~~old system~~ original system of changing; the only difference being in limiting the sum to $100, instead of ~~setting~~ confining to a minimum of $5.

3° After having entered the "small change deposites" at $86\frac{50}{100}$ I asked the Melter what was to be done, observing that this was a most irregular way of doing business, — his answer was to "assume a fineness of 896 without analysis, and thus to work them out — giving thereby an arithmetical standard suitable to his purposes, but certainly not legal. This, I refused. He then told me to ask the Assayer (he could not do it himself or dared not do it, because among the numerous persons of this institution from whom his irascible temper had debarred all personal communication, was the Assayer) to report all the Mexican dollars at 896. without ~~the~~ being melted or assayed — remarking that he could always save himself from censure as his reports had been heretofore 893. 894. 895. and that he the Melter & Refiner would be sure to make a profit of one half per cent. I told him that I was certain the Assayer would do no such thing. On his again insinuating this proposal, — I said that I would not be the bearer of such a proposition. He became offended, and asked for a settlement of a/cs in the middle of April, when a/cs are generally settled monthly; however his anger was ostensibly but momentary.

4° After Lacroix's deposits, came Tichenor's, consisting of Hammered Dollars & French crowns. These not coming under the class of "small change deposits" had to be melted: at the same moment, Damian Casas' deposits came in. Perceiving the irregularity of the numbering, I resolved to put a stop to it until I had seen the Superintendent, being sustained in this, by the Treasurer: In consequence of which, I sent in the Damian Casas' deposits — It was melted — It was then that the Melter came to me, and told me "Why have you disobeyed the orders given you to assume the Mexican coins"? not satisfied with my answer, which was analogous to the reasons stated above, he went and complained to the Superintendent of my having acted contrary to the positive directions given me. The Superintendent came in the office, and again reiterated his order — consequently after the Camean Celas' deposite, came in Guerin & Villarrubia with "small change deposites" which were entered on the Memorandum weigh B at the assumed weight of 86 $\frac{50}{100}$

5° Being still unsatisfied with this mode of doing business, I began the entries of the "small change deposites" on a separate book; the reserving of the "small changes deposites" being according to the directions, and thereby preventing confusion in the regular memorandum weigh book. It was then that I began to try to correct the numbering in the book

6° about that time Mr Parker was appointed weigh clerk to relieve me, I would not say of the great labour, but of the multiplicity of details, which must necessarily be the case in an institution of this kind. Finding that a page was very much defaced by the alteration of numbers; and considering that Book nothing but a memorandum book (which it is in fact as the Register is by law, and to the knowledge of all the officers, and of all persons who have made deposites here, to be the true, important and only record) I directed Mr Parker to remove that leaf, and make a perfect transcript~~ion~~ of what should be retained, and reject~~ing~~ all entries not regularly made. I was actuated, first by the motive of having a fair book, and secondly, by that of handing the new Clerk an unblotted book — These numbers are of no importance to the Melter. In changing the numbers, which he has often done, he must have been very negligent, or his intentions must have been to confuse the clerks of the treasury, or entrap the Assayer.

7° After having received the Bullion of Tichenor and D. Casas, I observed to the Melter that those deposits had been unnecessarily morseled into small moulds; — my remark was unattended to. It is a fact known to all persons in this Mint that a full mould is of greater weight than the hammered dollars of Tichenor — Why they were divided into small moulds, the Melter and Refiner alone can tell, or remain satisfied with this action without clearly and satisfactorily explaining it.

8° As soon as the assay-pieces were taken by the assayer from the Tichenor's and Damian Casas' deposits, the bullion was handed to the Melter. And as to the error which, on the day of payment to Casas, I told the Melter I thought I had committed, the matter has been clearly explained by Damian Casas himself, proving, what I merely suspected then, that his deposite was only $200. And consequently being of about the weight of 173 ozs, — how it could weigh 10 ozs more after melting, the Melter alone can explain.

9° Up to that time the Melter and Refiner had treated me with great kindness — conversing with me in an unreserved manner and demonstrating an uncalled for friendship. Very communicative on all subjects not directly appertaining to this Mint — such as the mode of doing business in Philadelphia &c — On one occasion he returned a deposite of Silver that he had melted, and as I was very busy at the time, he said he would weigh it himself and on his handing me the weight, I observed to him that it was eleven ounces short — he said, "Oh never mind put it a little more, we can make that up another time" — However, when I was disengaged, I weighed it, and found it 22 ounces short, — When I pointed out the fact to him — he said that it was nothing — remarking "we shall understand each other — there are very good situations in the Mint. I know an officer at the Mint of Philadelphia who was poor when he was appointed, and who is now worth $100.000." On an other occasion about the time of Damian Casas' deposite, and I believe it was the same or next day the Casas' deposite had been melted, he brought in a half burnt hammered dollar, which he said belonged to No 101, Guerin's deposite (which deposite was composed entirely of Mexican dollars and had never been melted), and that it had been found in the bottom of the pot — A small deposite of German Gold coins weighing about 5 ounces, was taken by the Melter & Refiner himself, and returned by himself weighing 7 ounces. As he as well as I, knew very well the number and value of the coins, he saw that he was wrong, and observed that he must have made a mistake. He then took it back with him, and sometime after returned it nearly corresponding to the original weight, but still a little over the original weight. The Fineness after having been assayed, was found to be 869 twenty three millièmes below the average Standard of the same coins, a considerable number of which have been deposited by the brokers, and consequently their average fineness well known. If a further statement upon any other or the same topic if necessary should be required of me, I shall give.

Very Respectfully Yours &c
M. D. Dimitry